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## Book Notices

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### THE CULT OF THE MOON-GOD, SIN<sup>1</sup>

The god Sin plays an important rôle in the religion of Babylonia and Assyria. He is referred to in historical, religious, and juridical texts with great frequency, and evident familiarity on the part of the writers. His relations with the cities of Abraham's early sojourns make the theme especially attractive to students of the Old Testament.

M. Combe states in his brief Preface some of the principles on which he makes this investigation. He does not intend to present an exposition of the astronomical doctrines of Babylonia concerning the moon. And he is convinced that the theory of eclipses, those of the phases of the moon and of its relation to the other planets, have not modified the doctrine of the moon-cult in Babylonia. Regarding the theory that the gods of Babylonia are personifications of planets, he says, "This association is the fruit of speculation, and a careful study of the names of the gods would suffice to prove that it is not primitive." Such claims on the part of certain Assyriologists led him to make a careful study of the names of the god Sin. He has almost limited himself, however, to a study of the cult in its relations to political history, in order to determine the phases of its development. In other words, this plan would largely guarantee to him a study of the facts in their chronological order. Hymns and prayers addressed to Sin are translated; and the work concludes with a list of theophorous proper names in whose composition we find the name Sin.

The material of the book is treated in two parts. Part I embraces eight chapters which discuss: (1) the names of the moon-god; (2) his genealogy and mythology; (3) the theological conception of the moon-god according to his names, his epithets, and his hymns; (4) the pictured monuments; (5) the cult; (6) the temples; (7) the influence of the cult of Sin upon the Elamite, Arabic, and Syrian cults; and (8) the conclusion. Part II (9) presents the texts in transliteration and translation, with a few notes; (10) a list of names compounded with the name Sin; and an appendix on Sin and Sinai, and an index.

The first encounter, under Sumerian names of Sin, with scholars is on the explanation of the usual ideogram EN-ZU. Combe maintains that "Sin" is a Chaldean name which was borrowed by the Semites, though,

<sup>1</sup> HISTOIRE DU CULTE DE SIN EN BABYLONIE ET EN ASSYRIE. Par Et. Combe, Docteur de l'Université de Paris. Paris: Geuthner, 1908. xvii+159 pages.

like Gudea (Stat. B. VIII, 48), he cannot interpret either it or its recognized ideogram, EN-ZU. He sees in EN-ZU-NA evidence that the NA is merely the phonetic complement of *Sin*, though there is thus far no proof that such is the case. The attempt to find "Sin" in the ideogram EN-ZU, reversed to ZU-IN, is plausible, but not textually proved unless we grant that EN-NA-ZU-IN in a Cappadocian text published by Sayce ("Cun. Tablets from Cappad.," in *Babyloniaca*, II, 1, p. 5) can be legitimately read ENNA-SIN, "Sin is lord." This reading is doubtful, and the Pinches text (in *JRAS*, 1905, p. 147) is too broken to add a single shred of evidence. While there is a possibility that we may yet find ZU-EN as a reading for Sin, thus far such an explanation is merely hypothetical.

Under the Semitic names of Sin, Nannar receives most attention. Jastrow's derivation (*Relig. Babyl. and Assy.*, p. 75), wherein he derives it from *nar-nar*, as BABBAR from BARBAR, is rejected. Combe proposes a derivation from the root *namāru*, "be bright," "shine," by an *m* formation, thus: *manmaru*, then *nanmaru*, and finally by assimilation *nannaru*. He makes *nannaru*, as does Haupt (*BA*, I, 7) *nannīru*, equivalent to the Hebrew מִנְיָר, Sept., Φωστήρ; but Haupt finds his form in an original *nanmīru*, thus becoming by progressive assimilation, *nannīru*. Combe cites no case where an initial *m* becomes *n* to prove the plausibility of his theory.

The god Sin has no history (p. 19), we have nothing about his birth or life, though there is a considerable amount of mythology about the moon—probably of late origin. Some of the interesting properties and abilities of the moon-god are widespread in early literature. He was invoked as a healer of disease, and as causing certain diseases. As an echo of this latter power, see Ps. 121:6, 7: "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. Jahweh will keep thee from all evil; he will keep thy soul."

The proper character of the moon-god is not manifested by violence nor by murderous force. His traits are agreeable and benevolent. Sin is a powerful lord, but not dangerous; he is a judge whose orders cannot be disregarded; but he is also a father whose nature is good. The god Sin, before everything else, is a friend and a protector; he pardons and he is helpful; he directs men by marching in their van; he is their support, and they can put their confidence in him. Sin recompenses, he spares, he favors, he sustains, he saves, he counsels, he gives, and he is a liberator. He is a shepherd, he maintains in good health, and he favorably hears supplications (p. 38). These are some of the main ideas connected with the theophorous names composed with Sin which we find in Babylonian and Assyrian.

The moon-god is first mentioned in the inscriptions of the *patesis* of Lagash (p. 46), provided we grant that they preceded in time the kings

of Ur and "the kings of Sumer and Akkad." And his chief seats were at Ur and 𒊕arran.

In the Hammurabi period Sin was named after Bel, but before Ninib, Ištar, Šamaš, and Adad. From the time of Hammurabi the cult of the sun had the pre-eminence, though Sin was found frequently in the proper names of the period.

Combe (pp. 69 f.) finds the *ziggurat* referred to merely in the name E-𒊕AR-SAG which Dungi calls his beloved temple, and finds a confirmation of his theory in a chronological notice of the time of Dungi, which reads "the year in which had been constructed the E-𒊕AR-SAG-LUGAL."

The traces of a Sin temple in Susa (p. 82) are well established and significant.

There is no trace of the cult of Sin in the Old Testament, not even in the name Sinai, as held by some archaeologists. The mere observance of feasts of the new moon probably has no reference to a cult. The pan-Babylonianism of Jeremias and Winckler are quietly brushed aside and discredited wherever the astral question comes to the front.

The dozen short texts transliterated and translated have all been published before except one (No. 6) small, badly mutilated Assyrian text of 21 lines. Six of them are in Assyrian, one and one-half are bilingual, and four and one-half Sumerian. The notes are replete with explanations of the various epithets and names of the moon-god which appear in these texts.

M. Combe has done a creditable piece of work, but it can scarcely be called a "history of the cult of Sin," for this he does not give. It is rather a survey of the prevalence of the cult of Sin in ancient oriental life.

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